

WESTERN MARYLAND SPORTSMEN'S COALITION, INC.

Garrett Allegany Washington Frederick Carroll

February 6, 2023

Honorable Members of the
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Subject: SB -0086 OPPOSE
Rifles and Shotguns – Possession – Age Requirement (Raise the Age Act Of 2023)

Dear Honorable Senators:

My name is Ben Kelkye and I currently hold the office of President of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. (WMSC) The Coalition is an organization that consists of thousands of individual members of many sportsmen's clubs of the five western Maryland counties of Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll. We meet regularly with authorized representatives of our members' sporting clubs, their designated county representatives and members of other associations & organizations affiliated with our sport.

Briefly stated, our mission is to provide recognition and publicity for area sportsmen and conservation clubs engaged in wildlife management and/or the preservation of land, water, and open space resources and to provide a forum in which each member organization may present and discuss its local memberships' views on such issues.

We strive to promote and protect the right of every law-abiding citizen to keep and bear arms and ammunition for self-defense and for all other lawful purposes, especially shooting sports, and to provide the sportsmen and conservationists of Western Maryland an opportunity to present a united and more effective voice in matters relating to the environment and fish and game management.

The Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition is very disturbed at the submission of **SB0086** that calls to raise the age of possessing a long gun and/or ammunition to the age of twenty-one years old. Many of our organizations, such as the Izaak Walton League of America, for example, work hand in hand with the Md. Department of Natural Resources in cultivating young hunters and teaching them safety and respect of all firearms. The safety classes are mandatory. A hunting license cannot be obtained without successful completion of the Hunter Safety Class that includes testing and hands on demonstration of safe gun handling.

We are very concerned that implementing this very restrictive proposal will discourage participation in the Hunter Safety Program and have an overall effect of reducing an entire generation of young, responsible conservation minded hunters and sportsmen. We are opposed to this legislation, however we believe that at the very least, those individuals under the age of 21 years old, who have successfully completed the Maryland Hunter Safety Program and have been issued credentials indicating so, should be exempted from this restrictive legislation.

I, as a private citizen of this State, together with the thousands of club members that are the heart of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. **strongly urge you to oppose SB-0086**, Titled: **Rifles and Shotguns – Possession – Age Requirement. (Raise the Age Act Of 2023)**

Respectfully,

Ben Kelkye

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Signed: Joe Winter, President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Jerry Zembower, President, Allegany & Garrett County Sportsmen's Association
Matt Guilfoyle, President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association